

SPEECH OF PRESIDENT FIDEL V. RAMOS
BEFORE THE VETERANS AT CAMP LAPU-LAPU
JULY 20, 1992

Thank you very much General Romeo Zulueta, the Visayas Command Commander. May I greet General Emil Alcosseba and Mrs. Alcosseba, and General Doctor Velasco, our good friend General Valentin Velasco, who has continued to be active despite of his many years of service in government and the private sector. My colleagues in the Cabinet, may I introduce them because these are the people that will help the veterans together with me the; Executive Secretary and the Presidential Adviser on Energy Affairs Peter Garrucho, Jr.. Kasama rin ninyo sa Visayas iyan dahil taga Pandan Antique si Peter. We have the Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government, Rafael Alunan III, taga Visayas din iyan, taga Negros Occidental. We have the Press Secretary Rod Reyes who is a veteran of many wars including covering the police beat when there were bullets flying around him, he stuck it out to get his story and now he is with us. Well, he is a familiar character among us the Secretary of National Defense, Rene de Villa, whom you know very well in the Visayas because he served many years in the Visayas.

May I also greet our very own chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers to the President on behalf of the private sector, former Governor Lito Osmena, my partner, and the undersecretaries and assistants. But may I highlight the presence here of the newly appointed Presidential Assistant for the Visayas with the rank of undersecretary Rhett Pelaez, who is familiar with the problems of Panay and Negros, of course Region VII and also Leyte and Samar. He speaks all of the dialects of the Visayas: Waray, Cebuano and Ilonggo, plus, of course, Tagalog.

We are here today to bring you some good news. But first of all, may I just request you in response to General Velasco's cry of anguish. May I request you not to die in the meantime. Medyo gumaganda na po ang panahon kaya kung mapipigilan natin and maybe the ladies can intensify their tender loving care for our veterans. We do have some very good programs for the welfare not only of the World War II veterans but especially their sons and daughters and all the other veterans as defined by our Constitution.

You are all familiar with the revival of the Philippine Veterans Bank. This is really for the benefit of the World War II veterans but there will be spill-over effects to the other younger veterans. I am happy to see here one of the directors of the Philippine Veterans Bank, Atty. Tito Mendoza, who is a well known labor leader as President of the TUCP but he pledged to me after the elections that he will concentrate more on being a veteran for our welfare.

We are trying to get the sons and daughters to be more active in the sense that they must speak up for your claim if you are no longer able to be physically active.

For this purpose in order to give a possible source of funding support to the projects and programs of the veterans through their sons and daughters, last week, I appointed former Congressman Eduardo Pilapil who is the President of the Sons and Daughters. He is the government nominee in the Oriental Petroleum Corporation which is the primary corporation in regard to the discovery of a very significant oil find in Palawan in the so-called West Linapacan area. Kaya kung anuman ang hawak ni Congressman Pilapil bilang government nominee, dito sa Oriental Petroleum, iyon ay hindi pupunta sa kanya personally ngunit ito ay para doon sa napakalaking sektor ng mga Sons and Daughters of the Veterans. Kaya don't die yet. Maraming oil diyan sa West Linapacan. Maari pa tayong makinabang diyan.

The second item that I would like to announce here is that, as some of you already know, those that were in the Negros Oriental area, last year we started a program for the livelihood training of still capable veterans of various categories as well as for their sons and daughters and this is by way of arrangement we have made with the Land Bank and the Filipino War Veterans Foundation or FILVETS of which I used to be the acting Chairman but now this is the hand of our good Secretary of National Defense, Rene de Villa. So this will be a source of livelihood opportunities for all of you and your dependents. Likewise we continue to have this arrangement with the DENR where the veterans and the sons and daughters participate in any of the programs available for reforestation under the DENR.

As you know, we have the family kind of reforestation programs where you have the communal and then we have the very big one which is the corporate and you will all have a share in it if you can organize your cooperatives or your people's organization. And lastly, there continue to be opportunities for the veterans as sectoral representatives in Congress. There is no particular slot for sectoral representative from the veterans nor from the military, wala po iyon. But there is a specific slot assigned for the elderly sector. That is what our good friend Ka Dionisio Ojeda represented during the previous Congress.

And so I say to this group now that should you want to recommend somebody representing the elderly and therefore also the veterans because those two go together. The process of selecting the most capable, the most qualified among you, from the bottom and then work upward so that in the end what we want is the choice of the majority of the veterans in the Visayas and I'll be happy to consider your recommendations for that purpose.

Mga kasama at mga kaibigan medyo kinakapos tayo ng panahon. I will end this short talk but make myself available for a couple of questions. Thank you.

Please continue to patronize our Veterans wards and clinics that have been established in our government hospitals all over the Visayas so that we will not die young but we will live to a ripe old age.

Salamat po.

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